

A
General Epistle
TO
FRIENDS,

By way of Caution, to take heed
TO THE
LIGHT;
That they may be preserved from that Lazy,
Idle Spirit, that Veils the
LIFE.

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General Epistle

To all FRIENDS, &c.

ALL dear Friends remember the Crofs of the Lord Jesus, which is his Power in you in every measure of its appearance and revelation in your inward parts, that is contrary to the power of Satan, and to all its motions and works within and without, and as you remember this Crofs, to bear it, it will give you power over all the power of Satan, and by it you shall be made able to war against the same and overcome it, with all its motions and workings of whatever nature. And as you bear it upon you, it will make you weighty, and solid, and grave in your Spirits and Conversation, and it will keep down all lightness, and froth, and vanity, and foolish jeasting, and laughter, and idle speeches, for who are found in these things bear not the Crofs but lay it aside, and so follow not Christ Jesus, but follow him that is contrary unto him, who is the Antichrist, who leads contrary to the leadings of Christ. Now Christ leads to take up the Crofs, Antichrist to throw it off; Christ leads into meekness, temperance, and gravity, but Antichrist leads into harshness, lightness and excess; Christ leads into the mortification of all the lusts, vanities and corruptions of the World, but Antichrist into the feeding and strengthening them. Now Friends, while you live in the World, you will have daily temptations by the World, and that Antichristian spirit that rules in it, to lead you into these things, and there is a part in all, till it be perfectly crucified, that is apt to commune with the temptations from without, to lead into the same things; so watch against that part, keep it under the Crofs, yea nail it to the Crofs for ever, till it be utterly slain, and so you shall be preserved from all the ungodliness and lusts of the world, and from all its corrupt ways, customs, fashions, idle speeches, vain and frothy communications, sportings, jeastings and laughings, which are not convenient to be found among them that profess the Lord Jesus Christ, and the bearing his Crofs, though

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they

they be too much to be found among most of them ; which gives an evil savour. O let all Friends watch against these things, and the spirit that leads into them, I say let all Friends watch against the corruptions of the world and worldly minded men and women, who may profess to be Christians, but are enemies to his Cross, who bear upon them the marks of Antichrist, and not the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ ; for the marks of the Lord Jesus, which his followers do bear in their Body and Spirit, are meekness, and temperance, and gravity, and weightyness in Spirit, in Word and Conversation, like unto Christ Jesus, who was never found to laugh, jest, sport, or use unprofitable and unnecessary discourse, but was a man of sorrows, well acquainted with griefs, and when he rejoiced he rejoiced in Spirit, and in doing good ; which is contrary to all that joy and mirth that is carnal, that abounds among carnal and hypocritical Professors, whose frothynefs, lightness, wantonness, idleness, vanity and folly in their words and conversations, are signes of madness and not of Christianity. So let all Friends stand up in the noble and virtuous Life and Spirit of Christ Jesus, to witness against all these things, and judge them and condemn them, and all who are found in them ; but if any of you be found in them, with the world, then you cannot witness against the world nor judge it. Oh Friends, to what purpose is it that we have denied the worlds corrupt words and wayes in some things, if we deny not the world in all its own corrupt words, wayes and works, to what purpose is it that any shall refuse to joyn with the world in saying *you* to a single person, and yet joyn with the world in other things as *bad* and worse ? And perhaps some will think it a great oversight to say *you* to one, and be ashamed and troubled for it, and yet joyn with them in that which the Light condemneth as much and more, and this is deceit and hypocrisie, which every eye in the world is open to see and observe, and reproach the Friends of Truth, and Truth it self on that account. Wherefore let us all be sober, and watchful in all things, that the enemy get no advantage, and if we refuse to bow our Bodies to Mens persons, which the Light condemns, let us also refuse to bow our spirits to the corrupt and filthy spirits of men, which the Light condemns also. So let us not partake in their filthyness, frothy wayes, customs, fashions, sportings, laughings, idle and unprofitable speeches which are good for nothing but feed the Serpent, are his meat and food, and strengthens that which is for judgement, and must die or go into everlasting torment. Concerning which things I have often born great burthens upon me both on my own account, and others, as finding the hurt of them, and how they

they defile and leaven into ungodlines, and uncleanness, and how they hurt and weaken the tender Seed and Plant of God, and brings clouds veils over it, and have a tendency to kill it, and quench the Spirit of God; and I certainly know, the judgement and wrath of God burns against these things, and is as a Swoord and a Hammer against them. So let all concerned take warning, and let the watchful be encouraged to be more watchful still, that ye may grow up as trees of righteousness, leaving all the badness and unfavouryness in the world behind you, and treading it under foot, that a good favour in all things you may be to the glory of God, and let all your words be savoury and seasoned with salt, even when you speak of natural things, and go about your business and occasions, in your Families, Fields and Market-places, and keep out of all unnecessary words as may be, which the wisdom of Truth will teach you, if you you apply to it, it will teach you to number your words as well as your dayes, and it will teach you to bring both your words in number, measure and in weight, and so you shall be kept from running out into either lightness or excess in your words,

And all Friends, shew forth the true and living Image of the noble Life and Spirit of Christ Jesus in all your conversation, and put away all that is ignoble, nasty and unsuitable to Truth, which becomes not saints; all the worlds ignoble and unvirtuous sayings, words and proverbs reject and forget them, let your speech be like unto the Saints, and not the World, even in the meanest things when you are together; in your eating, drinking and meeting together and parting asunder from one another, and naming one another, or calling upon one another in all these things, the world hath his corrupt wayes and customs, which savour not of a noble and virtuous spirit, as the corrupting of men and womens Names, as with respect of persons, for *John* to say *Jonie*, for *James* to *Jamie*, and the like; which has not a good Savour, but favours of that corrupting Spirit which spoiles and corrupts all things. And Friends, you know the Worlds Life and recreation is in words and discourse, and if they have no profanity and scurrility in it, then they think all is well, how much soever they talke and spend time in unprofitable discourse, which after it is all done serves for no other end but to ease and refresh that which wearie in silence, and in silent waiting upon God but kills and hurts the tender Life of God. For, if even the Letter kill, when a man speaks the Letter of the Scripture and not in a right Spirit, how much more doth that Kill which is bad both as to the words and spirit? And you know Friends, that when words are uttered from the Life
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and Spirit of God, then they refresh the Seed and Birth of God in all, both hearers and speakers; but when words are uttered from a contrary Life and Spirit, yea, though true and good words, they deaden and hurt the Seed of God, but they stir up and refresh the bad seed, the seed of the evil-doers, that is for judgement; and many times the effects of those idle and frivolous discourses, which Men and Women beget one another into, by answering one another, is that the light, airy, frothy, vain, wanton spirit that wearieth of the Cross, and is not subject to it, is raised up and strengthened in them, but that which is tender, meek, sober, and breathes for righteousness, is choaked, burthened, and deadned. So dear Friends, watch against all that leadeth out your minds into such things, and beware of hurting one another, and being occasions to one another of using superfluity of words; for if you love the Cross of Christ Jesus, and bear it, you will love silence, and fewness of words, and it will be a pain and unease to you, either to speak or hear words which have not in them a true savour of Life, nor a true advantage for good, in the speaking or hearing of them.

And, dear Friends, in all your Meetings to wait upon the Lord, be altogether in a present and diligent mind, having your loins girded about, and trussed up, and if you be diligent in applying your mindes to the Truth and Life of Christ Jesus in you, then all laziness, and heaviness, and weariness of mind will vanish, and the mind will be composed, and ordered, and that will make a well composed and well ordered Body, so that no thing, nor appearance of a weary or lazy mind will be found among you, nor of wanderings of mind, nothing of that nature will appear in the Body, to be an evil savour; but if the mind be lazy and sluggish, and love not its present work it ought to be about, which is to wait upon the Lord, then will Signes of it appear, as in particular to gape, or gawnt in a Meeting, is a ready sign of a mind that is sloathful, and is not present nor diligent in its attendance unto Truth, though such a thing may lye near to some true and honest Friends, and it may come upon them at unawars, and I verily believe many have not a clear sight of the thing, nor know not the hurt of it, but a hurt it is, and of no good savour at any time, but much less at Meeting, for it is that which even many men, but as men, can observe, that when a man gapes or gauns, in any exercise he is found in, it shews a mind that is slack, and is not present or diligent therein; and besides the hurt that this thing of gaping does in ones one particular, it hurts the general, both that it is an evil savour, and also that it begets others into the same, if not watched against, so
that

that one gaping, others will gape also, by a certain secret influence, which I have often observed with many others ; and this is not only a sign of laziness and weariness of mind, but also feeds it, yet if it be watched against, it may be resisted and put back, as I have had frequent experience and if at any time it so come upon any that they cannot stop it, yet they may cover it by stopping the noise of it, and covering the mouth with the hand or napkin, that it appear not, but the way to be rid of it, and get Victory over it, is by coming to a diligent attendance of mind, into the Truth, and this will put it quite away, yea it will compose the whole Man and Body, so that no marks of either weariness or wandering of mind will appear.

Dear Friends, bear with my freedom in these things, for they have a long time layn much upon me, which may be for a service to some. The Lord God make us in all things a good favour and a good example, both before one another and all the world, that he in all things may be glorified in us and among us, through Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

*The 22th. of the
10th. Moneth,
1670.*

G. K.

Post-script.

AND dear Friends, many of whom have been Professors, and in a profession of Religion before you witnessed the possession of the Life and Substance of it, and others who witnessed somewhat of the Life, it was but very little, and was accompanied with a great mixture of un-foundness both as to Spirit and Words, and the hypocritical ground had a deep place in many, as it hath at this day, among all the Professors out of the Possession of the Life of what they profess, from whence proceeds so many hypocritical shews and formalities, hypocritical prayings, confessions and professions, hypocritical singings, sounds, tones and accents, hypocritical sighings, whinings, wringing of the face, and putting on a sour and sad countenance when they pray, and their many other hypocritical

critical wayes, all arising out of the hypocritical ground and spirit, in an apish imitation of what the Saints did and do in the Life and Power of Christ Jesus; which Life and Power did and often doth work mightily in the Saints, and raised in them deep and wonderful affections, sometimes of grief, and other sometimes of joy and gladness; sometimes of fear and terrour, and sometimes of boldness and courage; all which had and have their natural impressions upon the voice, speech and countenance of those which have been, or are thus exercised. Hence some mourn as a Dove, so *David*; some chatter as a Crane, so *Hezekiah*; some quake and tremble, as did *Moses, Daniel, Habbakkuck*, and many others; some roar as a Lyon, some sing and make a sweet melody even with their voyces, and some sigh and groan unutterably. All which things in these holy men did proceed from the motions and workings of the Life in them, and so were a good savour to the Life in others, as having in them a manifestation of Life, and as it were a Signature or Impression of Life upon them: Which things at this day are witnessed by many of us, and dearly owned; so that it is only the hypocritical and counterfeited likenesses of these things, made by the hypocritical spirit that we disown, which not being able to reach unto the heavenly things themselves, maketh Images of them, which have upon them the very Signature and Impression of that hypocritical spirit which begot them, and are an evil noisome savour unto the true Life, and the Vessels in whom it is witnessed; therefore let all Friends watch against this hypocritical spirit and all its deceitful Images and Likenesses, and make war against the Beast, its Image, Number and Name, that a perfect Victory over it all may witness, and none may be found bearing his Image in any thing, but the heavenly Image of the Lamb, the Son of God in all things, that all your words and works may bear upon them the Image of his Life and when you pray, sing, exhort, teach or minister, it may be done in the pure motion and ability of Life, and you may be chaste waiters on and followers of it in its arisings and movings, so as in all your exercises to begin, go along, stop, stay, and rest with it; thus shall you be a good savour to God, and to one another, yea, unto all men in all things. Then shall you offer up the pure Incense and Sacrifice that is without spot or blemish,, that shall be pleasant and acceptable unto the Lord as in the days of old, being delivered and purged from all mixtures of hypocrisie and deceit, out of all the hypocritical likenesses, bearing upon you in all things the Image of the noble, royal and virtuous Seed.

Geo. Keith.

T H E E N D

James Mearns his book 1676

